

Pennsylvania Railroad Bryn Mawr Station
Northwest corner of Bryn Mawr and Morris Avenues
Bryn Mawr (Lower Merion Township)
Montgomery County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1081

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD BRYN MAWR STATION

Location: Northwest corner of Bryn Mawr and Morris Avenues,
Bryn Mawr (Lower Merion Township), Montgomery
County, Pennsylvania.

Present Owner
and Occupant: Pennsylvania Railroad, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Present Use: Railroad station until demolition in 1963.

Brief Statement
of Significance: Fine example of an early suburban Philadelphia
railroad station.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: Pennsylvania Railroad.
2. Date of erection: 1869.
3. Architect: Joseph M. Wilson (Wilson Bros. and Company).
Though the original working drawings are labeled
"Construction Department, PRR," and the Wilson Brothers'
firm was not founded until 1876, the station is claimed
by the Wilson Brothers in their 1885 book Catalogue of
Work Executed. This probably indicates that the station
was designed by Joseph M. Wilson, the architect of the
firm, when he was an employee of the Pennsylvania
Railroad. Further, the drawings are rubber stamped on
the reverse "Wilson Bros. & Co.
Civil Engineers & Architects
410 Walnut Street Phila."
The firm "Wilson Bros. & Co." styled itself, "Civil
Engineers, Architects and Consulting Engineers."
The principals of the firm, founded in 1876, were:
Joseph M. Wilson, C. E. & Architect; Henry W. Wilson,
C. E.; John McArthur Harris, Architect; Charles G.
Darrah, C. E., Hydraulic Eng.; Henry A. Macomb,
Architect; Howard S. Richards, Structural Engineer.
4. Notes on original plans: The original construction
drawings, preserved by the Pennsylvania Railroad, show
the east and west ends reversed from the building as
actually constructed. Otherwise, these drawings sub-
stantially agree with the station as built. In the

original construction the central bay on the train side was a telegraph and ticket office. Half of the eastern part of the station was a baggage room. In the central waiting room the ceiling was originally open to the gable, with cornice and ornamental Gothic Revival scissor trusses with pendants. An iron-truss pedestrian bridge led to the outbound side, where there was a very ornate stone Gothic shelter.

5. Notes on alterations: In 1900 the Pennsylvania Railroad undertook extensive alterations to the station. The principal change was the lowering of the floor level in the central and eastern parts 4'-6" to bring it to track level. The walls, windows, doors, trim, and porches were all extended downward to effect this. Other 1900 changes included the removal of the baggage room to increase the size of the ladies' waiting room at the east end, changes to the lavatories on the east end, and the addition of a second-floor bathroom over the west porch, for the stationmaster's quarters. The telegraph and ticket office was removed from the bay window and set up in a corner of the waiting room. The train platform shelter was extended. Other changes were made to the arrangement of the living quarters.

At a later, unknown date, the interior was again revamped. The ceiling was lowered to cornice level, doors were opened through the train-side bay window, the lavatories were altered and the ticket area expanded.

- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: The original route of the railroad swung to the south through Bryn Mawr, then called "Humphreysville." A station was built in 1859, at what is now Haverford and Glenbrook Avenues, and named "Whitehall."

This station still stands (1964) as the Bryn Mawr College Thrift Shop. In 1868 the railroad decided to straighten the line from Ardmore to Rosemont to eliminate the long curve around Bryn Mawr. This was completed in 1869, and the new station was built to serve the revised route. In securing the straightened route the Pennsylvania Railroad acquired extensive land around the station, which it eventually subdivided and developed as a high-grade suburban residential area. At that time Bryn Mawr was the terminus of the "suburban" passenger service to Philadelphia. In 1963 the Pennsylvania Railroad demolished the station, erected a small station to the East in Georgian Revival style, and sold off the remainder of the land for development.

- C. Sources of Information: Primary sources

Architectural drawings for 1869 construction--ink on linen, four sheets entitled "Bryn Mawr"; signed "Construction

Department PRR Princ. Assist. Engineers Office, 308 Walnut St. Phila."; rubber stamped on reverse "Wilson Bros. & Co." These drawings are at the Pennsylvania Railroad, Philadelphia Region Engineers Office, Philadelphia, Penna.

Architectural drawings--two sheets, ink on linen, entitled "Alterations to Station at Bryn Mawr," dated 1900, signed by rubber stamp "Approved July 3d, 1900 Jos. I. Richards, Engineer Maintenance of Way." These drawings are also at PRR, Phila. Region Engineers Office, Phila., Penna.

Interior inspected by J. C. Massey with L. R. Adams, M.W. Inspector, PRR in March, 1963.

Secondary sources

Catalogue of Work Executed by Wilson Bros. & Co., Civil Engineers, Architects and Consulting Engineers. Philadelphia, 1885.

Farrow, Barbara A. A History of Bryn Mawr, 1683-1900. Bryn Mawr: Bryn Mawr Civic Association, 1962. pp. 31-34.

Pennsylvania Railroad; 24th Annual Report. 1870. p. 59.

Tatum, George B. Penn's Great Town. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961. (For information on the Wilson Brothers).

Withey, Henry and Elsie. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased). Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Co., 1956. (For information on the Wilson Brothers).

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: A fine example of a Gothic Revival railroad station of the mid 19th century.
2. Condition of fabric: Demolished 1963.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Number of stories, over-all dimensions, layout--shape: One, one-and-a-half, and two stories; 28'-3" x 113'-6"; irregular layout, rectangle in shape.
2. Foundations: Medium gray rubble masonry.
3. Wall construction: Irregular ashlar stonework, warm gray color; tan sandstone string courses and labels.

4. Structural system, framing: Stone walls, wooden framing.
5. Porches, bulkheads:
 - a. Trainside: Three-bay porch with flat roof, brackets, paired columns and triple columns at corners; stone piers to columns; the lower bay added at east end in 1900.
 - b. Street side: Entrance porch, one bay wide with flat roof; brackets, paired columns and triple columns at corners; stone piers.
 - c. West side: Simple porch for residence, two bays in length; flat roof, wooden railing.
6. Chimneys: Stone chimney on west side, topped by a pair of octagonal molded stacks. Two other similar chimneys removed by 1900.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doors: Plain, four-panel doors with upper two panels glazed.
 - b. Windows: Plain two-over-two-light double-hung wooden sash in most windows; some one-over-one-light double-hung wooden sash in paired or small windows. Small trefoil windows in attic. Most windows have stone labels.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roofs, with jerkin heads; slate roofing with some decorative patterns.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: Some modillion cornices; decorative eaves at jerkin head roofs.
 - c. Dormers: Gable roof, stone dormers with decorated eaves.

C. Technical Description of Interior

1. Floor plans: Station is basically in three parts-- east and center sections are waiting rooms, which are one-story high (projecting lavatory wing on east end); west end is two-story living quarters with three rooms per floor, stairs, porch on west end, and bathroom over west porch at second story.
2. Stairways: Plain wooden stairs.
3. Flooring: Modern concrete.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster; wooden wainscoting in waiting rooms.
5. Doors: Plain wooden doors; simple "rustic" trim.
6. Decorative features and trim: None survived in 1963 except door and window trim.
7. Lighting: Electric, modern.
8. Heating: Modern central heat.

D. Site

1. Orientation and general setting: Faces northeast to railroad tracks, southwest to street; set in the center of Bryn Mawr, a small suburban town. There is a parking lot across the street. Four-track main line of railroad.
2. Outbuildings: Long platform shelters on both sides of track; freight house across Morris Avenue on south side of tracks; passenger shelter on outbound side, also switch tower; news agency at east, on platform; walkway under tracks.
3. Landscaping: Small garden at west end; mostly parking area.

Prepared by James C. Massey, Architect
National Park Service
March 1963 and December 1964